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STATE FOR EUR/CARC, TASKFORCE-1, INR/SPM, EEB/ESC/ISC AND E

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TAGS: [EPET](#) [ENRG](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [GG](#) [RU](#)

SUBJECT: THE CASE FOR INTENTIONAL TARGETING OF GEORGIA PIPELINE BY RUSSIA

Classified By: Ambassador John F. Tefft, reason 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: After visiting the site of the August 9 and August 12 Russian bombings of the Western Route (Baku-Supsa) pipeline, the Embassy believes a reasonable case can be made that the bombings were intentional. Three lines of craters cross the pipeline, and one missile, reportedly an SS-26 equipped to do damage to underground structures, hit nearby. The orientation of the bomb attack indicates it did not target military objects in the wider area around the pipeline. We recommend that aerial photos of the area be compared to the photos provided by the Georgian Government (emailed to EUR DAS Bryza, EUR/CARC and the Task Force) and the first-hand account that follows to help in analysis of the attack. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On August 19 Emboff visited the site of the Russian bombs and missile that fell on the Western Route (Baku-Supsa) oil pipeline. The site is between kilometer markers 25 and 27 of the pipeline (measured from the Azeri border) in the open country east of Rustavi. Vaziani military base is over some hills about four kilometers to the north. There is also the base's airfield and a long-abandoned, ruined Soviet base in the area.

¶3. (C) While Emboff is not an expert in analysis of bomb craters, we believe a reasonable case can be made that the Russians were intending to hit the pipeline. Aerial pictures of the area would show clearly the location of the craters vis a vis the pipeline and the military base and assist in analysis.

¶4. (C) Emboff's observation indicates that there were three lines of bombing that occurred on August 9, all north-south, nearly perpendicular to the line of the pipeline. In addition, a missile that the MOIA has identified as an SS-26 Iskander ground to ground missile landed in the vicinity of kilometer 27 of the pipeline on August 12 and scattered two or three large bomblets or fragments around the site of its initial landing point.

¶5. (C) Most of the bomb craters are about 10 meters in diameter and between 2-3 meters deep. The pipeline is buried 1.5-2 meters deep and is not visible, although jeep tracks run along it at various distances from it. It appears the bombs were dropped nearly exactly vertically on the ground, but by the way the soil was heaped up in some craters it appears the line of attack was from the north. The first line of craters is 25 meters east of kilometer marker 25. Seven or eight craters begin about 100 meters or more to the north, cross the pipeline and end about 100 meters or more south of it. A second line of craters starts about 50 meters south of the pipeline and heads off to the hills on the southern horizon. A third line begins north of the pipeline just east of the 26 kilometer marker, crosses the pipeline and continues south. The rim of one of the craters in that line is only one meter from the course of the pipeline, and the bottom is quite deep, maybe three meters. There may in

fact be damage to the pipeline that has not yet be ascertained at that point. However, the pipeline is not operating now.

¶ 16. (C) The Iskander missile hit the ground about 25 meters east of the pipeline (which turns north at kilometer 26). The MOIA took away the main body of the missile, but Emboff was told that the trajectory indicated it was fired from the south, probably from a Russian base in Armenia. The MOIA believes the missile was equipped with a "volume detonated" element that is intended for destroying underground installations.

¶ 17. (C) We recognize that an argument could be made that the attacks were failed runs at the military base to the north or the airfield. However, the line of the bomb craters does not line up with the axis of the airfield. The military base, four kilometers to the north, is really a field for tank exercises. It is over a range of high hills and completely out of sight of the pipeline and the craters. We estimate that either three planes, or one plane making three runs, did the damage. All attackers would have to be mistaken at the same time. Also, if the planes did come from the north, they would have had to seriously over-fly the military base before dropping their ordnance. Aerial photos would be helpful to display the facts on the ground.

¶ 18. (C) A counter-argument is that the Russians have controlled large parts of the same pipeline in other areas and have not yet damaged it, to our knowledge. The existence of the low-value military targets in the area also raises the

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possibility of a targeting error.  
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